

Goal 2:	Employees will have access to continuous learning opportunities for updating knowledge and skills so they can use changing technologies and new production processes in the workplace and be competitive in the global economy.
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“In the knowledge age, a state or person who fails to be constantly learning new things will fail. The Community College System is the primary vehicle for people of all ages to continue to learn, to gain new work skills, to expand their personal horizons, to be challenged to undertake new things, and continue to grow.” (Martin Lancaster, President, N.C. Community College System)

Training for workers is provided by the public and private sectors. National figures indicate that industry provides more training and retraining than the public sector, but there are no figures available for North Carolina employers.

North Carolina has been recognized for its efforts to prepare those entering the workforce for the first time and for its efforts to recruit jobs. The North Carolina Commission on Workforce Development has set out a strategic plan for preparing workers. “In 2000, the North Carolina Community College System’s workforce training programs were ranked as the best in the nation by *Expansion Management* for the second year in a row. The programs have been cited as a key reason for our state’s continued business growth.” North Carolina also received the 1999 Distinguished Performance Award from the National Alliance for Business for creating an education and workforce development system that prepares students and workers for the 21st century.³⁴²

Training Needs

A study by the N.C. Commission on Workforce Development on incumbent workers and skills for the 21st century states, “Training is essential to help workers keep their jobs in industries that are transforming themselves as well as to provide individuals with good career options for the future. The success of the State’s business and industry depends on the availability of well-trained workers who keep learning throughout their careers.”³⁴³

Continuous Learning

The need for continuous learning is emphasized in national reports and other studies in North Carolina. The American Society for Training and Development states in its 2000 Trends Report that, “Workers also must be equipped with the ability to learn. Educational institutions, governments, and training and development professionals throughout the world have been devoting increasing attention in recent years to helping individuals acquire not only basic knowledge and job-related skills but also the skills they need to make learning itself a lifelong process.”³⁴⁴

Distance Learning

Distance learning opportunities are now available through the University and Community College Systems and through a variety of courses on the Internet provided by other universities and private companies. The University of North Carolina has pilot projects and is evaluating models and strategic challenges facing distance education before developing extensive collaborative projects. The North Carolina Community College System has developed its Virtual Learning Community, a growing common catalog of Internet-based curriculum and non-credit courses available to all members of the NCCCS.